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**THE “BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE”: A REPLACEMENT FOR "ONE BELT ONE ROAD" WITH SAME PROSPECTIVE FOR ASEAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Belt and Road Initiative, first English translation namely, “One Belt One Road”, has brought a lot of misinterpretations, because the partners tend to focus much more the word “one”, assuming that there is only one maritime route and a single land belt. But for real, “The Belt and Road Initiative” aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa along five routes. So, the Chinese government decided to change the name of its epic initiative to wrap up the Eurasian supercontinent and Africa with an array of trade corridors like the laces running around the world.

Since 2009, China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner, and since 2011 ASEAN has been China's third-largest trading partner. Given the vitality of the economic stability of the ASEAN states to China, considering the geographical proximity of the region, a key priority of the BRI is ASEAN's burgeoning economies. Alongside the AEC, the BRI will further integrate the growing regional community through developing infrastructures in the region and improve its trading policies. The BRI will also provide a pathway for China to bolster its relations with the ASEAN nations economically. The implementation of the Belt and Road agenda requires a high level of cooperation and understanding between and among ASEAN states and China. Alongside the strict enforcement of policies and analysis of risks and prospect, this would lead to bolstered economic development and linkages between Southeast Asia and China.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, ASEAN, Prospective

**1. INTRODUCTION**

“One Belt One Road”, was first introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2013, and along with the idea of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. Since then, China has consistently made efforts to realize the concept through the establishment of significant investment chains, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund, to support the development of infrastructure and connectivity in many countries (Liu Weidong, 2016). Since 2013, the first English translation of this initiative, namely, “One Belt One Road”, has brought some misinterpretations, as the partners tend to focus too much on the word “one”, assuming that there is to be only one maritime route and a single land belt, or assuming that the infrastructure belongs to one nation - China.



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Perhaps, China also realizing that “One Belt One Road” was not really the best foreign language name for something that is distinctly plural (Wade Shepard, 2017). “One Belt One Road” covered three overland routes and one maritime which extend between China and Europe, therefore China government decided to come up with a term that would be more clearly for the international, and make sure that this initiative would be seen as a "win-win". After gathering for consult from many public sectors, Translation Bureau of the Peoples’ Republic of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, they came up with a replacement for “One Belt One Road” to “The Belt and Road Initiative”.

As Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs said “in reality, The Belt and Road Initiative aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa along five routes. Supposedly, the perception of a single road as a limited offer can drive the regional partners into competition mode, therefore, the stressing of the numeral “one” is to be avoided. Also, the word “initiative” has been admitted into the official acronym in order to stress the openness of the strategy, and to avoid criticisms over “China-centered institution building”, that have been gaining momentum as the project progresses.”

As China becomes more global, The Belt and Road Initiative is providing a platform for new trade partnerships. It aims to break down barriers and promote co-operation between nations. Many Chinese investors said that they came to ASEAN, because it is a key destination for China under The Belt and Road Initiative. China and ASEAN have done well in developing their cooperative relationship (Xu and Yang, 2016). Knowing ASEAN is always important to China’s grand strategy and China cherishes its relationship with ASEAN countries. China’s perspective on ASEAN has not been affected by the South China Sea disputes, even though they have had some negative effects on mutual trust and the environment for close cooperation. In facing the challenges more efforts need to be made to build new trust and initiate new mutually beneficial actions. The BRI provides a new framework and opportunity for China and ASEAN to deepen their relations through close consultation and cooperation.

### **“BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE” INSTEAD OF OBOR**

The Belt and Road Initiative refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, a significant development strategy launched by the Chinese government with the intention of promoting economic co-operation among countries along the proposed Belt and Road routes. The Initiative has been designed to enhance the orderly free-flow of economic factors and the efficient allocation of resources.

#### **WHY IS FIRSTLY NAMED AS “ONE BELT ONE ROAD”**

Initially it announced as “One Belt One Road”, and why firstly named as “One Belt One Road”. President Xi Jinping invoked the legacy the Han dynasty’s envoy Zhang Qian, the founder of the Silk Road linking ancient China to Central Asia, Persia, and Rome. In May 2017,



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He referenced another Chinese official, the Ming dynasty's admiral Zheng He, who led maritime expeditions to Southeast Asia, India, and Africa in the 1400s CE. President Xi Jinping has described Zhang and Zheng as "friendly emissaries leading camel caravans and sailing treasure-loaded ships" who "built a bridge for peace and East-West cooperation." But the names are confusing as the 'One Belt' is actually a network of roads, and the 'One Road' is actually a sea route (Musgrave and Nexon, 2017).

However, why is "One Belt One Road" so indistinct? Nobody is absolutely certain about what is "One Belt and One Road. One Belt, One Road is a gathering of interlinking exchange arrangements and framework extends all through Eurasia and the Pacific, but the meaning of what precisely qualifies as an OBOR undertaking or which nations are even engaged with the activity is indistinct.

#### CHINSE POLICY NAME WHTH THE NUMERALS

Although numerals are common when talking about homeland Chinese politics, such as "one country two systems", "the three represents", "the four comprehensives" etc. They have shown that China has put a lot of effort to create their own brand name, which has become widely recognized within both traditional and social media, as well as the professional circles, out of fear of being misunderstood. While OBOR which is also had a numeral in its name, in reality aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa along five routes." But "one" in OBOR just implied only a single network. Supposedly, the perception of a single road as a limited offer can drive the regional partners into competition mode, therefore, the stressing of the numeral "one" is to be avoided. Also, the word "initiative" has been admitted into the official acronym in order to stress the openness of the strategy, and to avoid criticisms over "China-centered institution building", that have been gaining momentum as the project progresses.

After realizing that "One Belt One Road" was not the best English translation for the name of strategic that is distinctly plural. China decided to come up with a term that would be more palatable that would be seen as a "win-win". Therefore, the central compilation and translation bureau of the peoples' republic of china, as well as the Chinese academy of social sciences, they decided to set the new replacement for one belt one road to "The Belt and Road Initiative or BRI". And China suppose that BRI would better reflect the project's network cluster. It would also make it sound more like an inclusive initiative rather than a strategy, echoing Xi's claims that "the 'Belt and Road Initiative' is not set by "Ideology" or "A Political Agenda."

At Present, The Belt and Road Initiative is also intended to further market integration and create a regional economic co-operation framework of benefit to all. The Belt and Road Initiative try to connect Asia, Europe and Africa along its five routes. First, The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on: 1) Linking China to Europe through Central Asia and Russia; 2) Connecting China with the Middle East through Central Asia; 3) Bringing together China and Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. And the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road focusses on using Chinese main



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ports to: 4) Linking China with Europe through the South China Sea and Indian Ocean; 5) Connecting China with the South Pacific Ocean through the South China Sea.

### **THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE IS TRANSFORMING ASEAN**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a long-term economic development plan proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. As part of the overall “Go Global” strategy, the BRI aims to enhance China’s economic connectivity with Asia, Europe and Africa, thus helping Chinese companies to broaden/deepen market access, enhance global competitiveness, and secure the supply of important natural resources. While the short-term focus of BRI is mainly on infrastructure investment, the long-term implications are much more than that. The whole idea of BRI is not only about building a transport route between China and the participating countries, but also a trade and investment corridor, which could generate the goods and services to be transported along the route. The ASEAN Master Plan for Connectivity (AMPC) and China’s Belt and Road Initiative have major commonalities. Both envisage transport connectivity as a way of bringing countries closer to one another, facilitating better access to trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people exchanges (Anushka, 2018).

### **ASEAN AS CHINA’S STRATEGY PERSPECTIVE**

Southeast Asia is a huge neighbouring region for China, to which it is connected by land and the South China Sea. As the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) becomes a Community bringing all countries together, China has given priority to developing the relationship with ASEAN. China is recognized in the region as an economic opportunity, a political heavy weight, but not necessarily a military bully, even as Beijing continues to modernize its armed forces.

The economic relationship is key for China in terms of developing its comprehensive relations with ASEAN. In negotiating the FTA with ASEAN, it was China that firstly regarded ASEAN as a group, providing a model for others to follow. This close economic relationship becomes a foundation stone for deepening China’s overall relations with ASEAN. Strong economic linkages and shared interests between China and ASEAN have played an essential role in helping to stabilise and improve their relations. In 2015, China’s FDI in ASEAN reached US\$9.45 billion. According to ASEAN statistics, China became the fourth largest FDI source after the European Union, Japan, and the US. We believe that with the progress of the BRI, production capacity cooperation will be highlighted, and ASEAN is the main region for China to carry out production capacity cooperation (Guo and Li, 2016: 21). At the same time, other forms of exchange and cooperation, ranging from culture and education to tourism, have also developed strongly.

In terms of the future perspective, economic relations between China and ASEAN will be further strengthened by several new supporting agendas, such as the upgraded CAFTA (China-ASEAN Free Trade Area), implement with the BRI, as well as the conclusion of the negotiation on



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the economic partnership. Based on a more open market framework and more industrial capacity cooperation, it is expected that the economic integration of China and ASEAN will be significantly enhanced.

#### THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE WILL BOOST ASEAN

It is clear that peace seeking and peace-building have become common goals for all members of ASEAN (Razak, 2015) , and ASEAN has continued to make progress and move forward to be a stable and prosperous region and more construct its role in networking with other partners, including China, outside the Southeast Asian region for cooperation.

Since 1991, the China–ASEAN relation has been upgraded from a dialogue partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership based on the belief that their cooperation will realize a ‘win–win’ result (Wang, 2011). However, the China–ASEAN relationship has entered a new stage and is facing new challenges. The Chinese economy has arrived at a ‘new normal’ and main driving force behind future Chinese economic growth is expected to be technology and product innovation, and domestic demand. With the Chinese economy moving to a higher stage based on a demand led model supported by innovation, China and ASEAN will have the opportunity to forge a new structure. China will invest more in ASEAN to establish the production networks and import more from ASEAN.

The BRI provides a new opportunity for China and ASEAN to deepen their economic cooperation. The BRI is considered a new type of development cooperation based on the principles of jointly consulting, designing, constructing, and sharing the benefits. A necessary condition for BRI to synergise with AMPC (ASEAN Master Plan for Connectivity) and better serve human development is that ASEAN speaks with one voice in its dialogue with China.

ASEAN could be the vehicle of negotiation between Southeast Asia and China to make sure that the AMPC benefit from the various financing vehicles linked to BRI. One way to do it would be to act collectively in the AIIB which is a multilateral institution where projects to be financed will be discussed. Other financing vehicles such as the Silk Road Fund leave ample room for bilateral relation between China and individual ASEAN Member to attract additional funding for specific local infrastructure projects. An ASEAN collective action could also be useful to coordinate the Japanese and Korean infrastructure initiatives so that they do not compete directly but complement each other to avoid duplication and the waste of resources.

The priorities of the BRI will be: (1) Policy coordination through coordinating the economic development strategies and policies, working out plans and measures, and providing policy support for the implementation amongst partners; (2) Connectivity through building infrastructure networks by also integrating construction plans and technical standard systems; (3) Promotion of trade and investment through improving investment and trade facilitation, and removing investment and trade barriers for the creation of a sound business environment; (4) Financial cooperation through





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building a currency stability system, an investment and financing system, a credit information system, and a currency swap and settlement system, developing the bond market, establishing new financial institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund; (5) People exchanges by promoting cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges and cooperation, media cooperation, youth and women exchanges, and volunteer services, to win public support. By working together, China and ASEAN will develop a new dynamic economic area.

Alongside the AEC, the BRI will further integrate the growing regional community through developing infrastructures in the region and improve its trading policies. Also, the Chinese initiative will address an infrastructure deficit and support industrial development. The ASEAN region is known to be a fast-growing regional bloc, and will continue to develop economically with strengthened international and regional linkages (Anushka, 2018).

The BRI will also provide a pathway for China to bolster its relations with the ASEAN nations economically. This will also support China's project of further developing its 20,000-kilometer rail network to deliver technology and services regionally.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Belt and Road Initiative, first English translation namely, "One Belt One Road", has brought a lot of misinterpretations, assuming that there is to be only one maritime route and a single land belt, or assuming that the infrastructure belongs to one nation - China. After gathering for consult from many public sectors and make sure that this initiative would be seen as a "win-win", Translation Bureau of the Peoples' Republic of China and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, they came up with a replacement for "One Belt One Road" to "The Belt and Road Initiative".

The ASEAN Master Plan for Connectivity (AMPC) and China's Belt and Road Initiative have major cooperation and connectivity. China and ASEAN as neighbours are linked together by geography and interests. For a better future, they need to frankly express their perspectives to each other and define their common goals and share their agendas in both bilateral and regional affairs (Zhang, 2017).

However, the BRI also raises concerns for the ASEAN states, in particular that China may make use of economic incentives to lead participating states into broader cooperation with itself, threatening the regional body's unity. This may eventually increase Chinese economic might and strategic pathways in the region, pressuring ASEAN members to recalculate their strategic alliances and re-evaluate their relations with China and their global interests. The results of the BRI so far have evidently supported ASEAN's need for infrastructure development.

The implementation of the Belt and Road agenda requires a high level of cooperation and understanding between and among ASEAN states and China. Alongside the strict enforcement of policies and analysis of risks, this would lead to bolstered economic development and linkages between Southeast Asia and China.



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